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The walrus and the scaremonger

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Body

Excerpted from "Attenborough's tragedy porn of walrus plunging to their deaths because of climate change is contrived nonsense," on University of Victoria Zoologist Susan Crockford's Polar Bear Science blog, April 7.

A recent Netflix Our Planet program with david Attenborough delivering a disturbing message of doom about walrus falling off a cliff to their deaths because of climate change is contrived nonsense on par with the bogus National Geographic starving polar bear video of 2017. The walrus shown in this Netflix film were almost certainly driven over the cliff by polar bears during a well-publicized incident in 2017, not because (as the show claims) they were "confused by a combination of shrinking ice cover and their own poor eyesight."

There are no precise details about the time and place of the incident shown in the "Our Planet" film, except that these were Pacific walrus "in the russian Arctic" according to The Times (5 April 2019)... However, even with only that information, a short Google search for walrus falling off cliffs in russia reveals an incident from 19 October 2017 that was reported by the Siberian Times: "Village besieged by polar bears as hundreds of terrorised walrus fall 38 metres to their deaths".

In 2017, a group of about 20 polar bears, waiting for ice to form so that they could leave the village of ryrkaypiy, stalked a herd of 5,000 or so walrus ... The particular conformation of the region at Kozhevnikova Cape shows how frightened walrus could easily move from the beach to the top of the cliff along a gentle slope, and then be driven over the edge by fear or misstep.

The bears were then able to feed off the many carcasses after the survivors took to the water ... even if the footage shown by Attenborough was not the 2017 incident in ryrkaypiy (or a similar one from another year or similar location), we know that walrus reach the top of cliffs in some locations and might fall if startled by polar bears, people or aircraft overhead, not because they are confused by shrinking sea ice cover. Walrus will not replace polar bears as an icon for global warming because neither is being harmed by reduced summer sea ice.
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The walrus and the scaremonger

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